

Child Welfare Services System: An Overview

Presentation to the California Child Welfare Council

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Overview: 3 Goals

1. Provide information to create a basic understanding of California's overall child welfare services (CWS) system.
2. Highlight some of the recent progress and successes in our CWS system.
3. Identify ongoing challenges in our CWS system.

Fundamental Definitions

- Child Welfare Services (CWS) System: the general, broad array of child-serving systems that can potentially touch vulnerable children and families.
- Child Welfare Agency: each state has a single state agency for child welfare. In California, it's CDSS. In CA, each county also has a child welfare agency (more to come).
- Foster Care: a component of the CWS system serving children removed from families. Administered by the county child welfare and probation departments.



MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of the California Department of Social Services is to serve, aid and protect needy and vulnerable children and adults in ways that strengthen and preserve families, encourage personal responsibility and foster independence.



California CWS System Overview

- California's CWS is a State supervised/County administered system.
- It includes a continuum of services from prevention, early intervention and family reunification through placement and permanency. Many services serving the population come from a variety of departments (education, mental health, drug treatment, Medicaid, etc.)
- It is outcome oriented in that it has prescribed performance measures (federal and state).
- It is funded at over \$3.6 billion with federal, state and county funding (doesn't include other department's services, above).

California: State-Supervised, County-Administered CWS System

FEDS

US Dept of Health & Human Services
Administration for Children & Families

Title IV-B
Title IV-E

CFSR & PIP

STATE

Funding &
Requirements

Outcomes &
Accountability

CDSS
Single State Agency for
Child Welfare

Local Assistance
Regulations

C-CFSR & SIP
(AB 636)

County
CWD

County
PROBATION

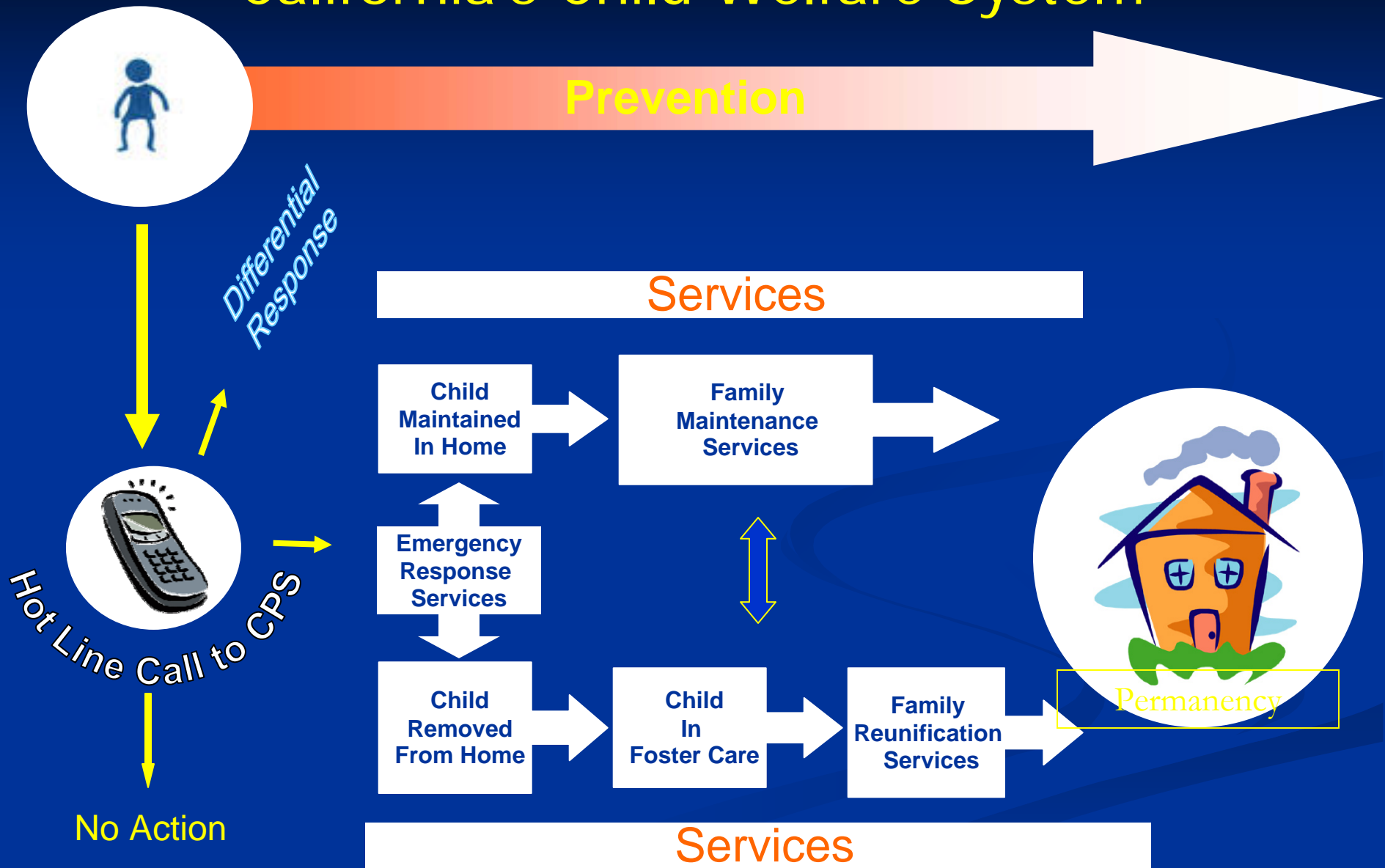
Services



Role of the Court

- Courts ensure due process and that basic rights of children and parents are respected when children are in the custody of the state.
- Courts ensure legal responsibilities are met for children and parents and oversee disposition of cases and placements.
- Courts ensure a level of accountability and monitoring on an individual case plan basis.

California's Child Welfare System



CWS Basic Information

- 483,000 calls to county emergency response call centers (hotlines) over the course of a year
- 107,687 cases of substantiated child abuse/neglect*
 - 62,183 (58%) youth remain in home
 - 45,504 (42%) are removed from home
 - 35% with relatives
 - Primary reason: neglect
 - 71% aged 6 or older
 - Native American and African American children over-represented

**75-90% of substantiated child abuse/neglect cases are involved with alcohol or other drug abuse*



Last week my Dad was arrested for drugs and now he's in jail, but...

My parents use drugs, things got real bad and we all went to live with my Aunt.
my Mom is getting help for her drug problem.



My name is April. I'm 12 Years Old. I have a 6 year old sister and a 2 year old brother.



My Aunt says my sister and I have been referred for a special kind of treatment



California Department of
EDUCATION

My Aunt lives far from my parents so we all had to change schools

After we went to live with my Aunt we each had Health Exams



The health exam showed that my little brother has a medical problem and they referred us to a place called **"The Regional Center for Early Start Services"**



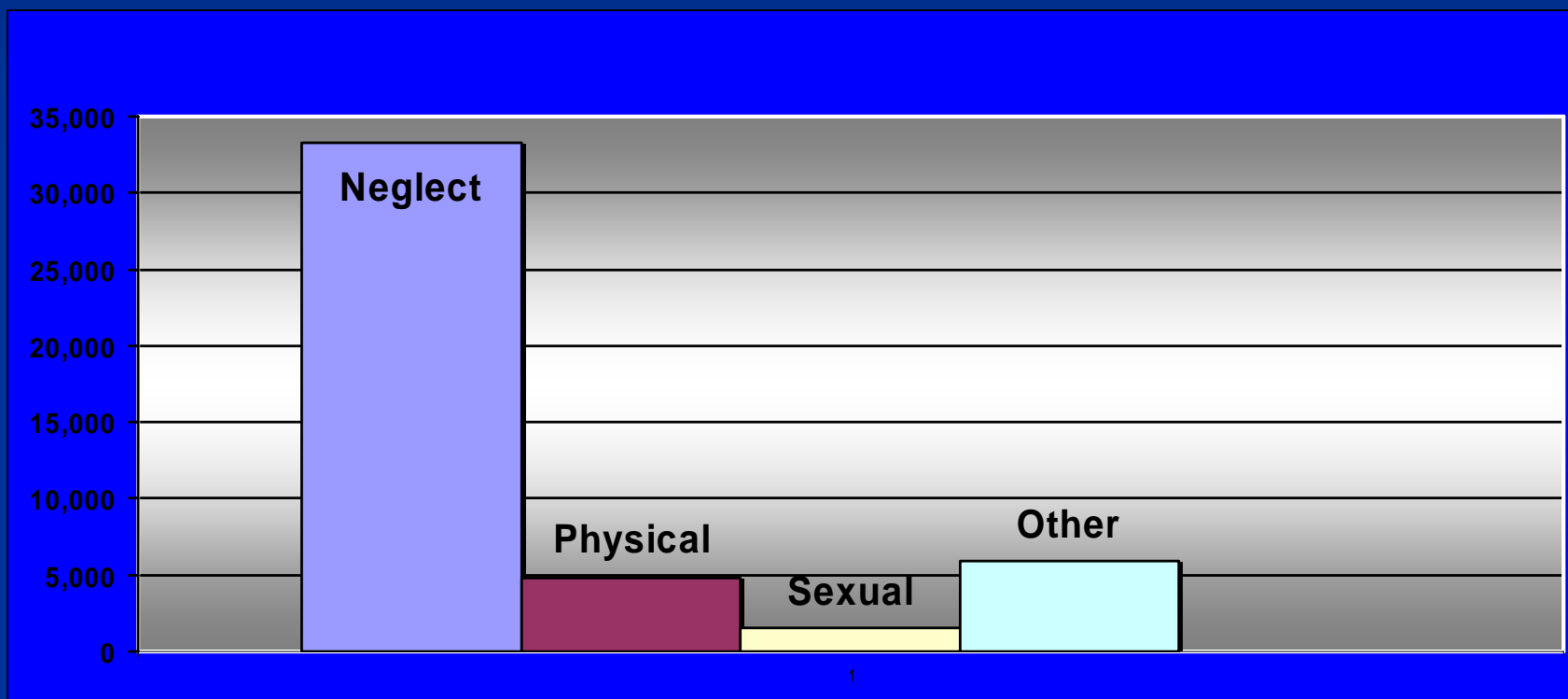


Foster Care Basic Information

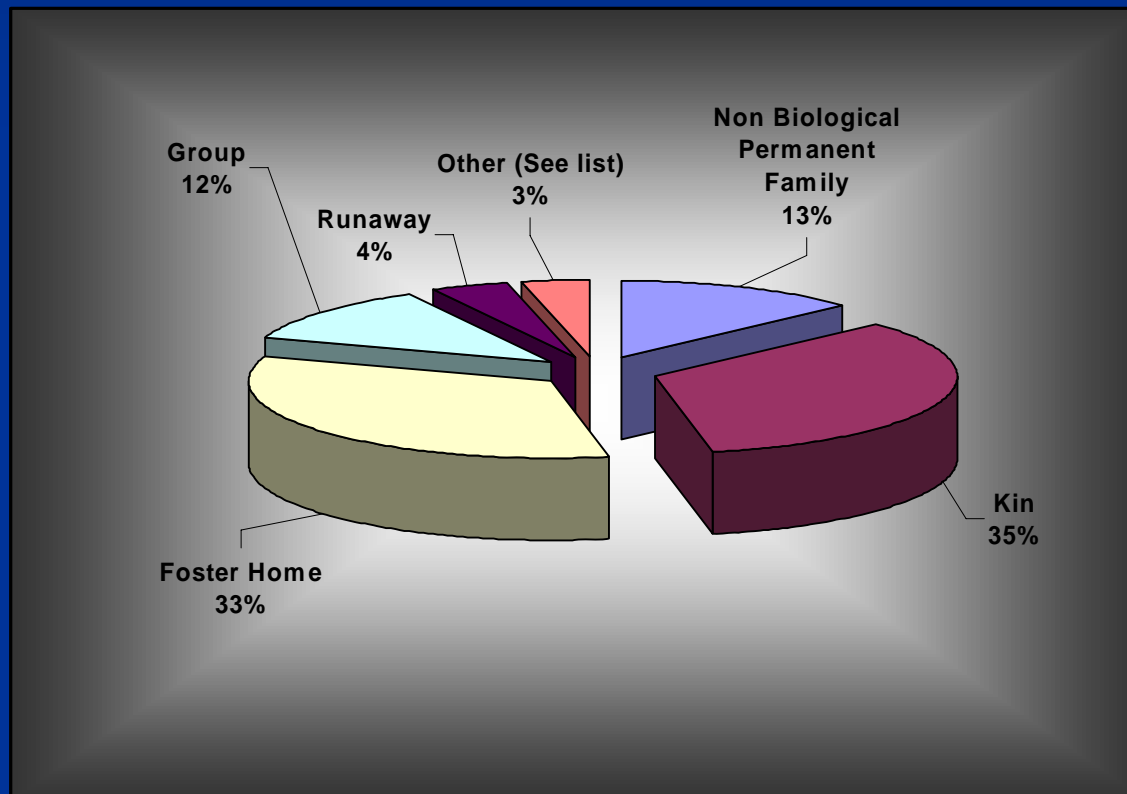
- Current average of ~85,000 children/youth in foster care (removed from family)
 - Just over 77,000 supervised by county child welfare departments
 - About 8,000 supervised by county probation agencies

Reason for Removal from Home

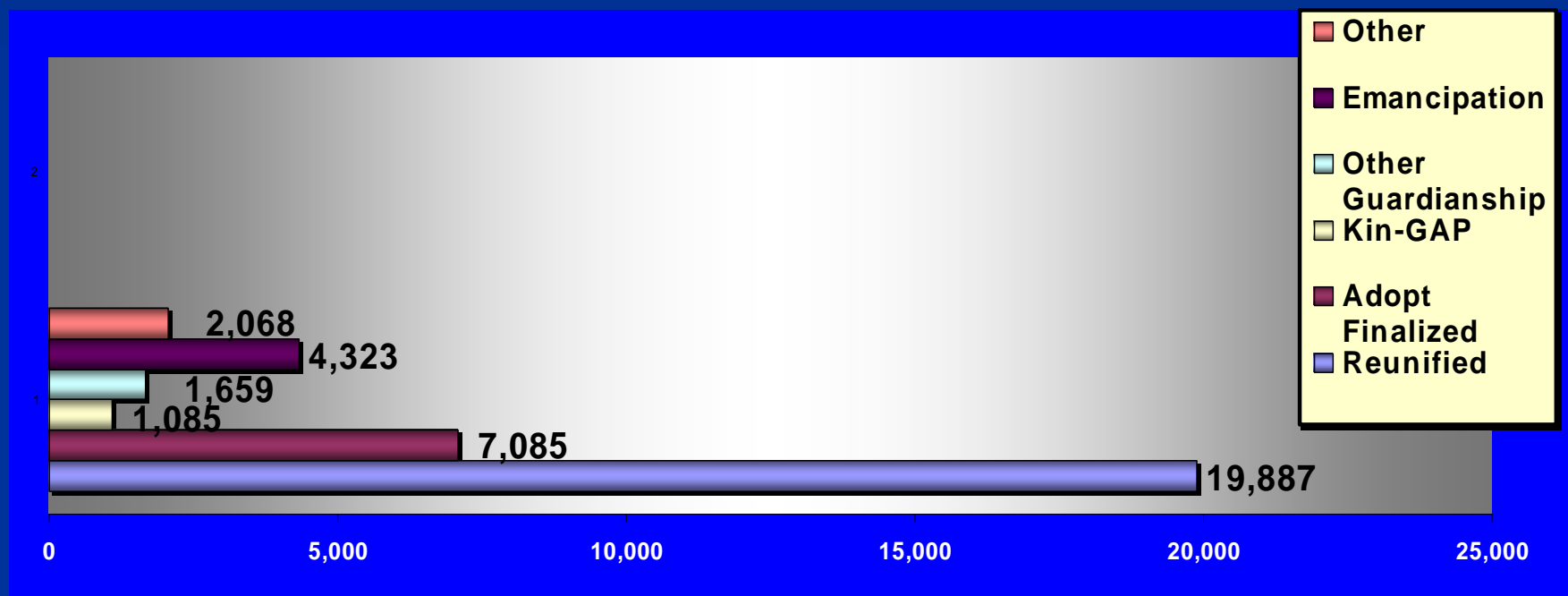
(45,500 children)



Youth in Foster Care: Placement Type

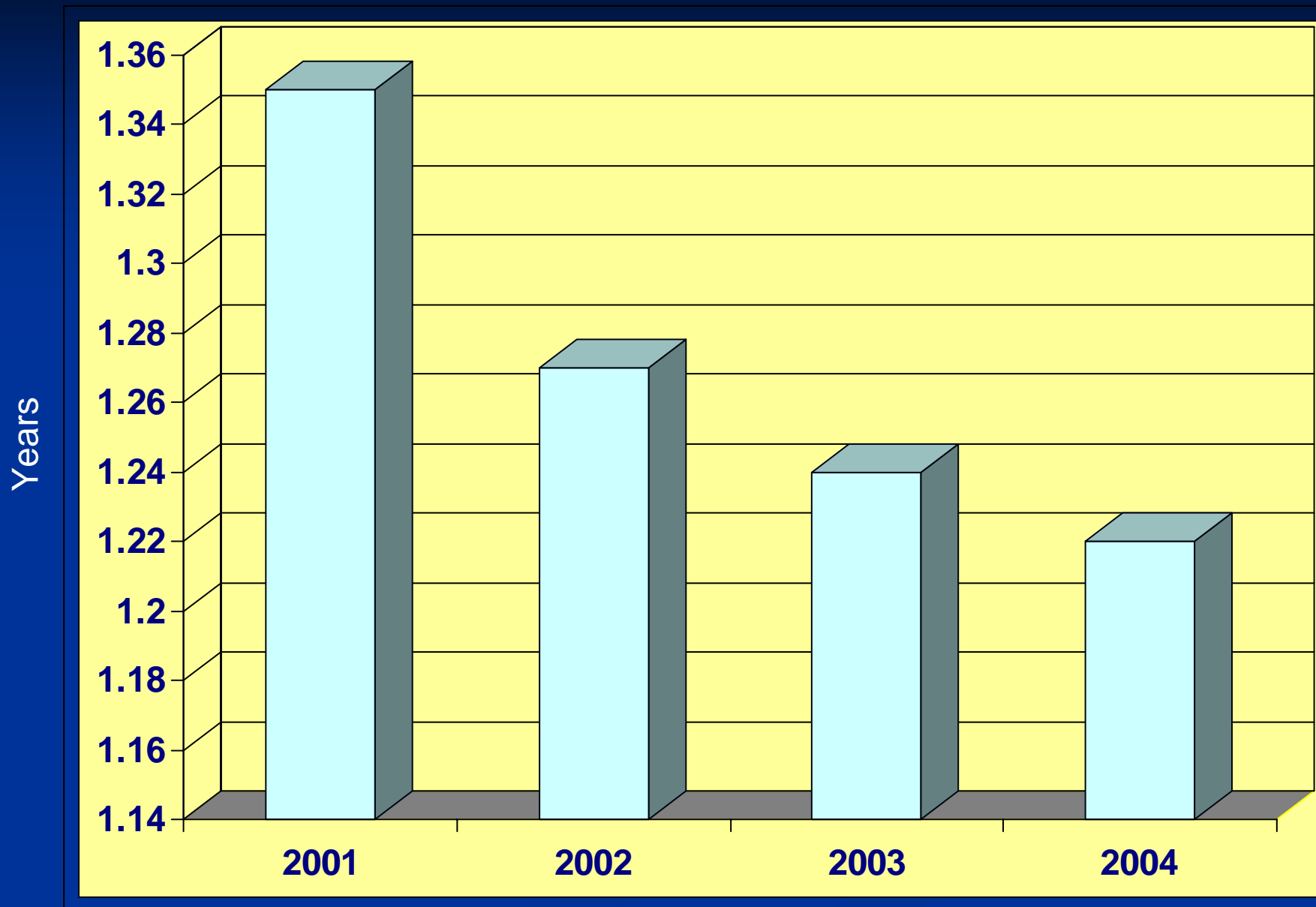


Youth in Foster Care: Exits from Care



Median Length of Stay in Foster Care by Year Entered

CWS Supervised, Stay of 5 Days or More



Examples of CWS System Outcomes

Safety

- Children are, first and foremost, protected from abuse and neglect
- Children are safely maintained in their homes whenever possible and appropriate

Permanency

- Children have permanency and stability in their living situations
- The continuity of family relationships and connections is preserved

Well-Being

- Families have enhanced capacity to provide for their children's needs
- Children receive appropriate educational services
- Children receive adequate physical and mental health services

Child and Family Services Review

Round One: (2002)

- Federal Government provides resources; ASFA97 created “report cards” called CFSRs
- CA’s first review in 2002
- At initial assessment, CA like other states, failed (12/14 measures)
- CA Initiated 2000+ tasks in PIP, passing all but 2 measures, decreasing potential liability from \$80M to \$8M (estimated)

Child and Family Services Review

Round Two: (started, with 2/08 reviews)

- New way of measuring outcomes
- Higher threshold for passing
- Statewide Self Assessment due 11/07
- Selecting three counties for on-site review
- On-site review February 2008
- Result in a Program Improvement Plan

Collaborations are Critical to CWS

- Coordination between existing partnerships: state level, public, community based, private, philanthropy, etc.
- Partnerships key to achieving desired outcomes (i.e., safety, permanency, and well-being)
- Partnerships throughout the continuum of care

Collaborations to Date

An Opportunity for the CA CWC

CA Has Excellent Foundational Work:

- Executive Branch: State Interagency Team (SIT)
- Judicial Branch: Blue Ribbon Commission
- Legislative Branch: Select Committee on Foster Care
- Philanthropic Work: funding program innovation
- Local Leadership: Counties and CBOs implementing evidenced-based practices locally
- State relationship with UC-Berkeley to use data to continually improve and reform practice innovation

<http://cssr.berkeley.edu/UCB%5FCHILDWELFARE>

California CWS Challenges

■ Funding

- Increased flexibility to eliminate emphasis on emergency and intrusive services like foster care and provide earlier services for troubled families;
- Better integration of funding and services to maximize resources

■ Information & data sharing across agencies

- Supporting integrated and improved systems of care
- Eliminate gaps or duplications in service, maximizing use of limited resources

California CWS Challenges, cont.

- Inter-county transfers of children and impact on services, etc.
- Transitioning youth or those preparing to exit system and what we do to maximize their successful independence
- Diversion—strengthening communities and families so fewer children end up in foster care (building on differential response)

Next Steps: Key Questions

1. Do you agree these are the key challenges facing California's CWS system?
2. What do you see as the appropriate role of the CA Child Welfare Council in addressing challenges?
3. How do we focus and organize our work to be most effective?